



By Ken Sakamoto, Star-Bulletin

*At today's opening session, Senate President Norman Mizuguchi said the state's "financial outlook is no more certain than it was a year ago."*

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## Tough issues loom over festivities

**After opening day ceremonies,  
the hard work will begin**

By Jim Witty and Mike Yuen  
Star-Bulletin



Bouquets, leis, gift baskets and political pageantry. They're the hallmark of another legislative session convening at the state Capitol.

For lawmakers, today's opening day is a time for camaraderie and fellowship. But they say they also realize it is the time to get down to business on a series of tough issues.

So by midafternoon, only a few hours after the morning opening-day pageantry, the House Finance Committee was to be back at work, holding a briefing on state strategies to manage budget shortfalls.



The state's continuing budget crisis - how to tame it and nurture long-term economic growth - was expected to be a common theme in opening-day speeches by Senate President Norman Mizuguchi, House Speaker Joe Souki and even Republican leaders Whitney Anderson in the Senate and Gene Ward in the House.

Mizuguchi (D, Aiea) and Souki (D, Wailuku) were expected to emphasize Senate and House cooperation to complete unfinished business.

That would include passage of bills to lower Hawaii's costly automobile insurance rates by as much as 30 percent and eliminate the so-called "high-three" pension perk for legislators.

Their promises were expected to also include finding a solution to the emotional and divisive issue of same-sex marriage, which so consumed the Legislature last year that paralysis resulted.



By Dennis Oda, Star-Bulletin  
*Anthony Debold puts flowers on Rep. Quentin Kawananaoka's desk in the House in preparation for today's opening of the Legislature.*

Minority leaders Anderson (R, Kailua) and Ward (R, Hahaione Valley) were expected to deliver speeches holding the feet of the majority Democrats to the fire, demanding that the Democrats move more quickly than they may intend to.

Two days ago, Ward and his 11 fellow House Republicans publicly demanded fast-track passage - by Feb. 13 - of bills that would slash auto insurance rates and quash the high-three perk.

House Republicans also want quick action on a bill that would amend the Hawaii Constitution, making

it clear that a marriage is defined solely as a union between a man and a woman.

The House GOP is also insisting on an emergency appropriation for a boot-camp prison using tents as temporary shelters.

While the curtain-raising hoopla today won't approach the magnitude and high-octane revelry of the Legislature's earlier years when the partying lasted all day, there's no mistaking a shindig's afoot. The celebration may be scaled down, but many lawmakers are enthused.

House Republican freshmen David Pendleton (Kailua) and Sam Aiona (Makiki) are.

They consider today's session opener a milestone. And they aim to mark it.

"It's the first time," said Aiona, who is originally from Hilo. "So it's a true celebration for family and friends. We're having a full Hawaiian spread."

Aiona said he sent out 1,000 invitations and expects many of those to show up.

Pendleton sent out about 400 invitations to family, friends and campaign workers.

"When you look at all the sign-wavers, these people who were out there risking heat stroke, this celebration's for them," he said. "My Filipino relatives are all baking their Filipino desserts."

While Pendleton's people were cooking, House and Senate staffers were busy putting the final touches on the festivities and preparing for the four-month-long flurry of legislative activity.

"We've been working for about a month straight, seven-day weeks, to get ready for the session itself," said House Chief Clerk Patricia Mau-Shimizu. "We wish we had another week to prepare but the Constitution says we have to be in there at 10 a.m."

Mau-Shimizu said preparations - from printing to a laundry list of logistics - were behind schedule because the House organized later than usual this year.

The House was to convene following a Hawaiian chant to cleanse the chamber, introduction of members and the national anthem and "Hawaii Pono'i" performed by Na Leo Pilimehana. The Senate side was to follow a similar schedule.



By Ken Sakamoto, Star-Bulletin  
*Gov. Ben Cayetano greets visitors at the Capitol today,  
including former Gov. George Ariyoshi.*

As for the Day One celebration, Mau-Shimizu said there wouldn't be anything "grandiose" - that ended along with the gulf war and high-flying economic times. Plus, she said, it may be opening day but it's also at least a partial work day. That goes for the Senate as well.

"Some senators do actually get to work the second half of the day," said Senate Chief Clerk Paul Kawaguchi.

Kawaguchi said preparations for today's kickoff - installing speaker systems, readying the chambers and a thousand and one other details - went relatively smoothly.

"Most of the people have been here before," he said. "It's a lot of running around. But in the end it comes together."

All week, gifts of food and flowers for lawmakers from well-wishers and lobbyists have trickled into the state Capitol. Today that trickle was expected to become a flood.

Among the opening-day flowers and fruit baskets delivered earlier in the week was a "survival kit" from Gov. Ben Cayetano.

"Best wishes and success for the 1997 session," declared Cayetano's message to lawmakers.

As someone promoting locally made products, it should come as no surprise that Cayetano's survival kits came from the Made in Hawaii Store in Pearl City.

Each kit included macadamia nut chocolate chips, local-style jerky, Maui mango jelly and poha jam.

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